

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 826

HE 029 675

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TITLE Division of General Studies at Morris College.  
PUB DATE [96]  
NOTE 14p.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*College Freshmen; Demonstration Programs;  
Educational Change; \*Educational Environment;  
\*Educational Objectives; Higher Education;  
\*Innovation  
IDENTIFIERS \*Morris College SC

## ABSTRACT

This paper describes a special academic environment in the Morris College (South Carolina) Division of General Studies to promote the success of entering freshmen in mastering course offerings in general education, as well as provide an Honors Program for students with superior academic ability, motivation, and background. The division attempts to challenge and motivate all entering students to master basic skills while introducing content areas in a manner that does not threaten, but nurtures and cultivates student achievement. This paper explains the division's objectives, services rendered, major programs and activities, enrollment and retention data, faculty, and resources. A faculty survey on the division's activities identified eight assets: student support; centralized handling of freshmen; extracurricular activities; sense of identity for freshmen, especially the undecided; leadership; focus on individual needs; dialogue with students; and advisement. The survey also described eight problems: low standards; too many hours; lack of funds and personnel; unsatisfactory faculty advisement; lack of communication; delayed computer training; overcrowded classes in certain sections; and general studies faculty have no opportunity to teach upper level courses. (MAH)

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DIVISION OF GENERAL STUDIES  
at MORRIS COLLEGE

*A potential model to improve freshmen success*

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ABSTRACT

The Morris College Division of General Studies was established as a distinct academic unit in 1988 to address the need to provide students with a strong academic foundation on which they could build in subsequent years. The conceptual development, organization and implementation of the division materialized as a result of felt, observed and assessed academic needs of Morris College first-year students. As designed, the division provides a special academic environment for entering freshmen that will promote success in mastering course offerings in general education, as well as provide an Honors Program for students with superior academic ability, motivation and background. The Division of General Studies works in conjunction with degree-granting divisions at Morris College to insure that all first-year students are adequately prepared to enter their major academic divisions. Through its design, the division becomes an interdivisional effort to challenge and to motivate all entering students to master not only basic skills, but to introduce content areas in a manner that does not threaten, but nurtures and cultivates student achievement. This unique division will be described in more detail to reflect objectives, services rendered, major programs and activities, enrollment and retention data, faculty and resources. The Division of General Studies at Morris College should serve as a model that reflects a progressive and aggressive attempt to positively impact the freshmen experiences at HBCUs.

OBJECTIVES:

-Introduce the Division of General Studies at Morris College as a model for dealing with problems generally encounter by freshmen at HBCU's

-To generate discussion related to the pro's and con's of this approach and how to best measure it's success

OUTLINE:

About Morris College  
About the Division  
Student support services  
Survey and retention data  
Discussion of pro's and con's

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Wayne Gearheart

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## ABOUT MORRIS COLLEGE:

Private, Baptist affiliation, Founded 1908  
4 year, liberal arts  
Open admission policy  
~ 900 FTE in 8 academic divisions  
18 majors  
B.A., B. Fine Arts, B.S., B.S. Education  
68 faculty  
41% Ph.D. (Faculty stats taken from '96-97 cat.)  
SACS accredited since 1978

## ABOUT THE DIVISION

Established 1988 as a separate academic division to:

1. Provide a stimulating, success-oriented academic environment to promote student retention
2. Help students recognize their responsibilities in the process of acquiring knowledge
3. Motivate students to strive for excellence
4. Facilitate the movement of students into degree granting divisions and improve success rates there.

By providing academic services, such as:

1. Academic assessment and placement services
2. Quality, student-oriented, instruction
3. Reading/writing, speech and mathematics laboratories
4. Learner's Assistance Program (LAP) - Title III
5. Student Support Services and Tutorial services
6. Honor's program

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM:

-24 credit hr (min) required for transfer to degree program  
- C or above required in Reading, English, Orientation, Math

- COURSES: 14-26 hrs

<u>Dev. Reading<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>English<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>Fr. Orient.<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>Math<sup>a</sup></u>
DS 101	ENG 101	GS 100	MAT 101
DS 102	ENG 102		MAT 102
	ENG 110		MAT 103

<sup>a</sup> placement test result determine beginning courses

- 24-26 additional hrs

<u>FINE ARTS(4)</u>	<u>HEALTH(2)</u>	<u>NAT. SCI.(8)</u>
ART 101	HPE 210	BIO 100
MUS 101		PHS 100

<u>SOC. SCI.(6)</u>	<u>PHIL.(5)</u>	<u>SPEECH(5)</u>
HIS 101	PHI 100	SPE 101
HIS 102	PHI 102	SPE 102

SPE 210

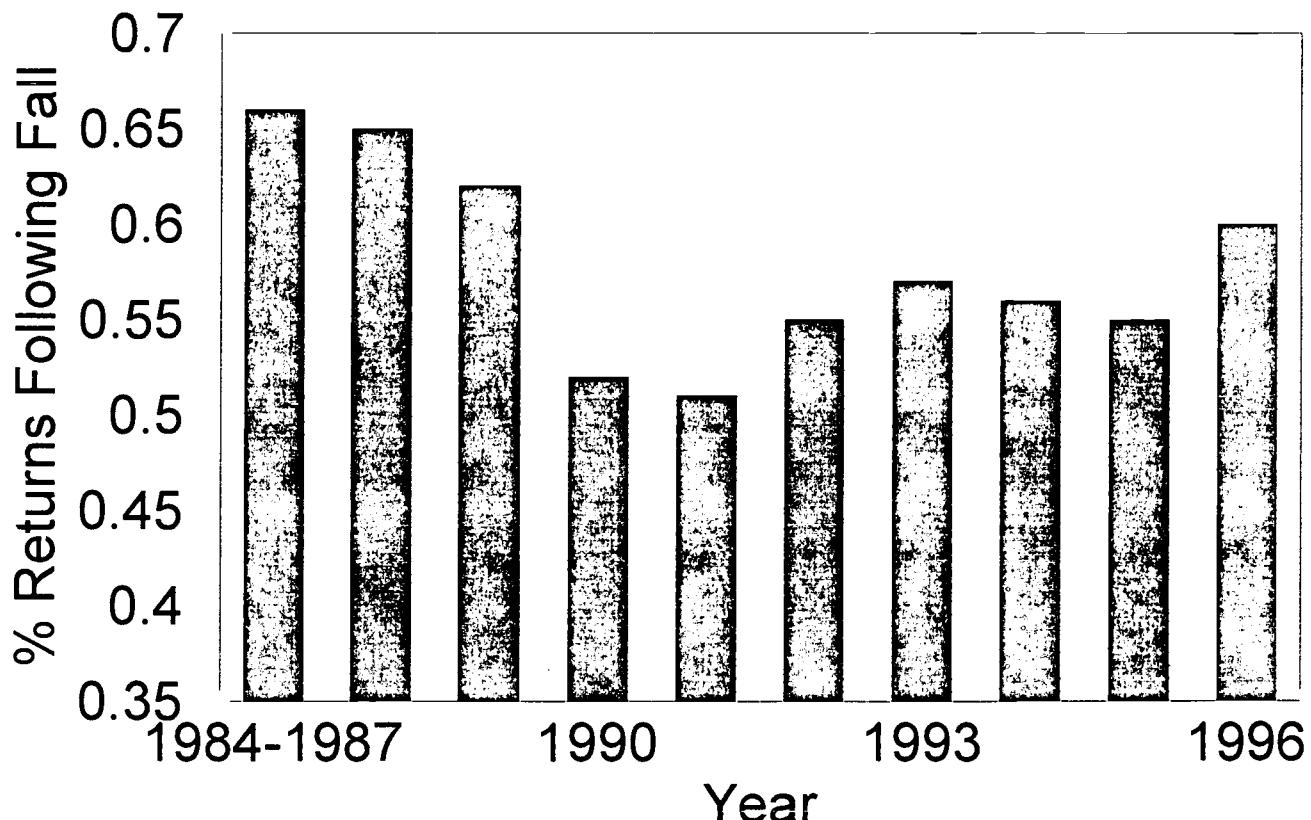
DIVISION FACULTY: 20 (6 pt) 35% Ph.D.

## RETENTION DATA: 1983 - 1995

YR	RET	YR	RET	GS AVG:
84-87	0.66	1992	0.55	
1988	0.65	1993	0.57	0.57
1989	0.62	1994	0.56	
1990	0.52	1995	0.55	
1991	0.51	1996	0.6	

% students returning as sophomores

## Retention Rates: 1993-1996



**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (SSS)**  
Division of General Studies

**WHAT:** A Title IV funded program for college freshmen who need academic support.

**WHO:** 175 freshmen yearly (2/3 low income, first gen.)

**HOW:** director, secretary, counselor, 2 instructors, 6 peer tutors.

**SSS Activities:**

Academic Advisement

Counseling

Tutoring

    Professional  
    Peer

Cultural Activities

Motivational Activities

Recreational Activities

**WILL HELP STUDENTS**

Expand knowledge

Enhance skills

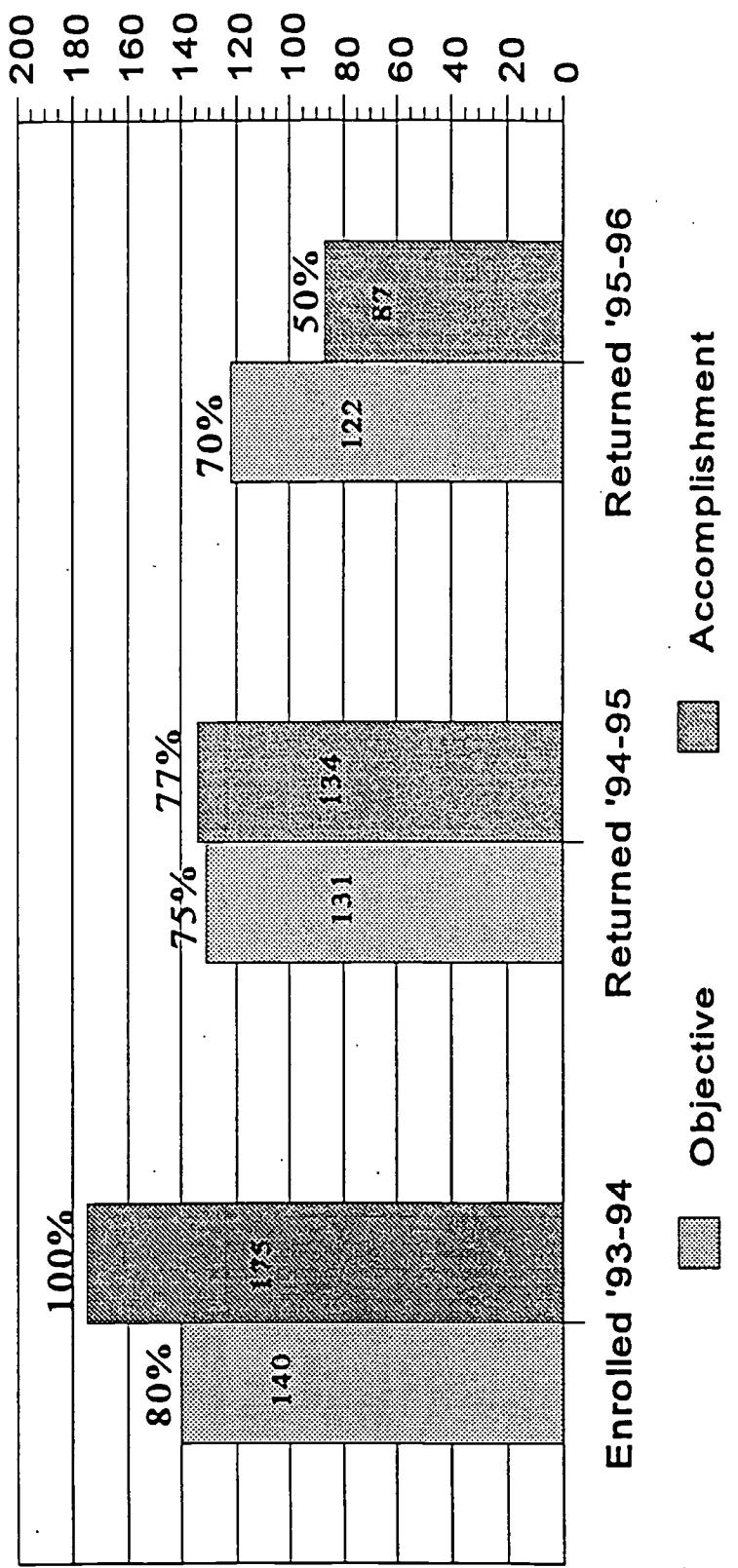
Improve study habits

Discover strengths

Build confidence

Achieve goals

## Tracking by Academic Year



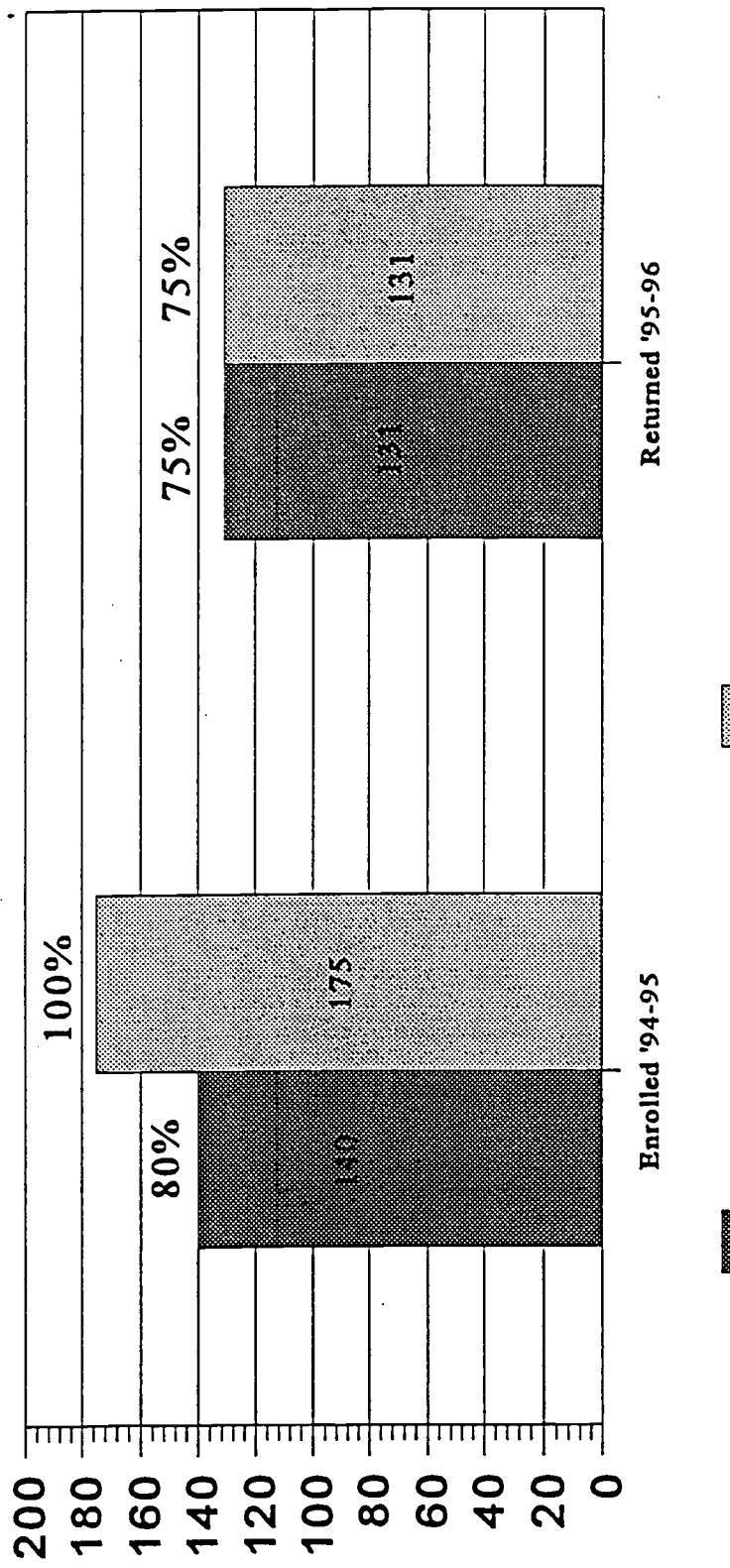
1993-94 Enrollee Totals for the three year period.

Objective: 393

Accomplishment: 396

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## Tracking by Academic Year



Objective	Accomplished
131	140

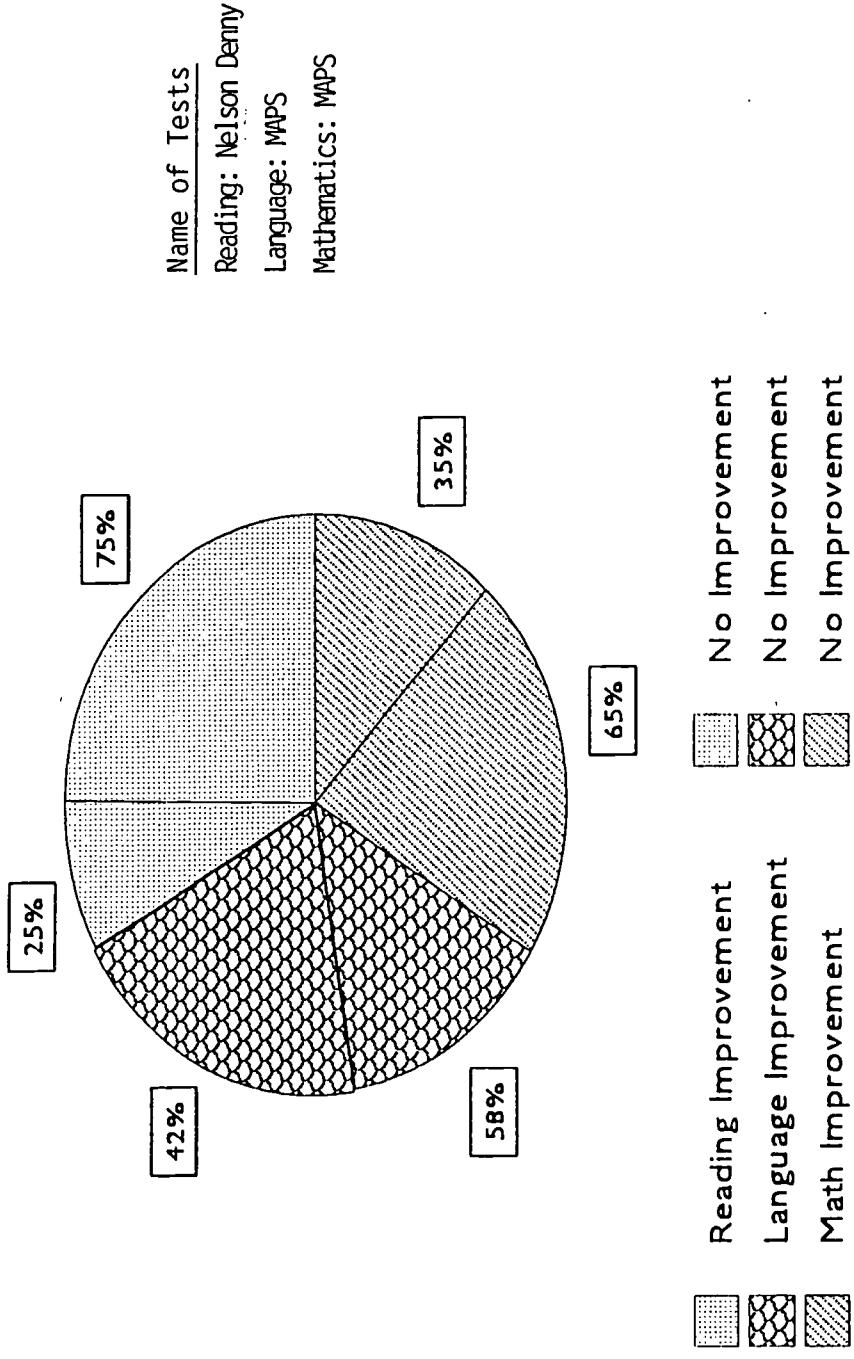
175

1994-95 Enrollee Totals for the two years.

Objective: 131

Accomplishment: 131

## Pre and Post Test Accomplishments - 154 Students 95-96



Reading Improvement	75%
No Improvement	25%
Language Improvement	42%
No Improvement	58%
Math Improvement	65%
No Improvement	35%

FACULTY SURVEY RESULTS:  
(15% of faculty responded)

I. Please rate the Division of General Studies from 1 to 5 in the following areas.  
(1 = poor, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = above average, 5 = excellent)

Avg. = 4.6 Faculty (credentials, professionalism, dedication)

3.6 Courses (quality, quantity, breadth, depth)

4.1 Administration (leadership, support, communication)

3.8 Student Support (quality, quantity, effectiveness)

3.9 Extracurricular (quality, quantity, effectiveness)

II. Please offer your opinion of the Division of General Studies as you see it meeting the needs of the students at Morris College by agreeing (A) or disagreeing (D) with the following:

% %

A D

89 11 General Studies is a positive asset to the students at Morris College.

22 78 The concept of a separate division for freshmen is good, however, the division needs considerable modification.

78 22 The concept of a separate division for freshmen is good and very few changes need to be made.

33 67 There is no need for a separate division to handle freshmen at Morris College.

22 78 General Studies has very little impact on the success of Morris College students.

I. ASSETS OF DIVISION OF GENERAL STUDIES BASED ON SURVEY:

- Student support
- Centralized handling of freshmen
- Extracurricular activities
- Sense of identify for freshmen, esp. undecided
- Leadership
- Focus on individual needs
- Dialogue with students
- Advisement

II. PROBLEMS WITH DIVISION OF GENERAL STUDIES BASED ON SURVEY:

- Standards should be higher w/ no grade inflation
- # of hours should be reduced
- lack of \$\$\$ and personnel
- Faculty advisement should be improved
- Lack of communication
- Computer training should begin earlier
- Over crowded classes in certain sections
- In general, general studies faculty do not teach upper level courses

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